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# RAW COURAGE





**LOOK!**

**THESE  
TWO  
TERRIFIC  
ISSUES  
NOW  
ON  
SALE**



**The NELSON TOUCH**



**ESCORT**



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# RAW COURAGE

**I**N ITALY IN 1943 THERE WERE SOME BRITISH BATTALIONS WITH SUCH PROUD FIGHTING RECORDS THAT THEY WERE ALWAYS FIRST IN LINE FOR THE TOUGHEST MISSIONS. COMMANDOS IN EVERYTHING BUT NAME, SUCH A UNIT WAS THE 1st. MIDSHIRES.





# Chapter 1. *The Furious Fool*

IT WAS IN SEPTEMBER THAT THEIR C.O., COLONEL CUTLER, CALLED HIS OFFICERS TOGETHER TO TELL THEM THEIR LATEST ASSIGNMENT. IT WAS TO SPEARHEAD THE EIGHTH ARMY'S DRIVE ON THE FORTIFIED TOWN OF CAMPELLO.

CAMPELLO WILL BE A TOUGH NUT TO CRACK, BUT IT MUST BE TAKEN! FIRST WE ARE RETURNING TO SORREGNO FOR TWO WEEKS' INTENSIVE TRAINING. THERE WILL BE AN INTAKE OF DRAFTEES TO BRING THE UNIT UP TO FULL STRENGTH.



AT THAT VERY MOMENT, A DRAFT OF SIXTY MEN HAD ALREADY DISEMBARKED AT TARANTO.

ALL RIGHT, LADS—  
FIND YOUR OWN PLACES  
TO KIP DOWN FOR THE  
NIGHT. OUR TRAIN  
LEAVES AT DAWN.





AMONG THOSE MEN WAS PRIVATE JOHNNY SMITH — AN 'EAGER BEAVER', KEEN TO PLEASE, BUT WITH AN UNLUCKY KNACK OF MAKING A MESS OF EVERYTHING HE ATTEMPTED. HE CHOSE A SPOT WELL AWAY FROM THE OTHERS.

JUST THE PLACE!  
I'LL KEEP MY RIFLE AND  
EQUIPMENT WELL  
PROTECTED FROM  
THE DEW, HERE.



AS SMITHY LAY DOZING HIS MIND FLASHED BACK TO THE DAY HE JOINED THE ARMY. HIS DAD AND HIS BROTHER BERT HAD ACCOMPANIED HIM TO THE STATION TO SEE HIM OFF.

GOOD-BYE, JOHNNY. I'M GLAD YOU'LL  
BE JOINING A FIGHTING UNIT.  
I—I'LL BE PROUD OF YOU!

AND IT  
WON'T BE LONG  
BEFORE I'LL BE  
JOINING UP,  
TOO.





# Raw Courage

JOHNNY HAD KNOWN THEN WHAT WAS IN HIS FATHER'S MIND. IN THE 1914-1918 WAR THE OLDER MAN HAD BEEN PUT IN THE LABOUR CORPS BECAUSE OF SHORT-SIGHTEDNESS AND HAD BEEN BITTERLY DISAPPOINTED BECAUSE HE HAD NEVER BEEN IN ACTION.



AFTER BASIC TRAINING, SMITHY HAD BEEN POSTED TO THE 2nd. MIDSHIRES. FROM THE FIRST HE WAS AS KEEN AS MUSTARD, BUT IT SOON BECAME PLAIN THAT HE WOULD NEVER MAKE A SMART SOLDIER.





SMITHY WAS NATURALLY AWKWARD AND UNTIDY. DESPITE ALL HIS EFFORTS, IT WAS ALWAYS THE SAME STORY...

THIS BED IS A DISGRACE!  
PUT HIM ON A CHARGE,  
SERGEANT.

YESSIR!  
NAME?

SMITH,  
SAR'NT!



IT SEEMED TO SMITHY THAT HE SPENT MORE TIME ON JANKERS THAN HE DID ON NORMAL TRAINING.

LIFT THOSE KNEES  
UP, YOU SLOPPY  
LOT!

GOOD  
THING DAD  
CAN'T SEE  
ME NOW!





# Raw Courage

ONE DAY, HE OVERHEARD HIS PLATOON SERGEANT TALKING TO THE COMPANY COMMANDER...



AFTER THAT, SMITHY TRIED HARDER THAN EVER. HE WAS STRONG AND TIRELESS AND WHEN IT CAME TO THE ASSAULT COURSE HE WAS AHEAD OF EVERYONE...



HE WAS STILL GOING STRONG WHEN EVERYONE ELSE WAS PRACTICALLY COLLAPSING FROM EXHAUSTION.

THAT  
CHAP SMITH  
IS AS TOUGH  
AS THEY  
COME!

YES—IF ONLY HE'D  
SMARTEN HIMSELF UP  
A LITTLE.



THROWING DUMMY  
GRENADES, SMITHY  
BEAT THE BATTALION  
RECORD BY YARDS...

AMAZING!  
THE LONGEST  
THROW I'VE  
EVER SEEN!





# Raw Courage

BUT ON THE RANGE THROWING LIVE GRENADES, SMITHY RAN TRUE TO FORM! A MILLS 36 SLIPPED OUT OF HIS HAND, HIT THE TOP OF THE BANK AND ROLLED BACK INTO THE TRENCH...



NO ONE WAS HURT, BUT IN THE EXCITEMENT SMITHY CHARGED INTO THE BOMBING OFFICER AND KNOCKED HIM FLAT!



WHILE SMITHY WAS BLOWING UP THE FIELDS OF ENGLAND, THE WAR IN ITALY WAS RAGING FIERCELY. THE 2nd. MIDSHIRES RECEIVED ORDERS TO DRAFT THIRTY VOLUNTEERS TO THE CRACK 1st. BATTALION.



SMITHY HEARD HIS MATES TALKING ABOUT IT IN THE HUT THAT NIGHT — AND HIS AMBITION WAS FIRED...





WHEN THE ADJUTANT SCANNED THE LIST OF VOLUNTEERS TWO DAYS LATER, HE WAS OVERJOYED.

LOOK AT THIS, SIR — IT'S ALMOST TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE! PRIVATE SMITH HAS VOLUNTEERED!

SMITH? BUT THESE ARE SUPPOSED TO BE OUR BEST MEN!

I KNOW, SIR, BUT WE'VE BEEN WANTING TO GET RID OF SMITH FOR MONTHS. PERHAPS THE FIRST BATTALION WILL BE ABLE TO MAKE A SOLDIER OUT OF HIM.

I DOUBT IT! BUT — ALL RIGHT, PUT HIM DOWN.


SO PRIVATE JOHNNY SMITH MARCHED OFF WITH THE DRAFT, HIS HEART SWELLING WITH PRIDE.

DAD WILL BE TICKLED PINK WHEN I WRITE AND TELL HIM I'M JOINING A PICKED UNIT, ON ACTIVE SERVICE!




## Chapter 2. *Into the Line*

AT LAST, SMITHY HAD ARRIVED IN TARANTO, ONLY A FEW HOURS FROM THE FIGHTING LINE.



IT'S REAL  
SOLDIERING FROM  
HERE ON. I'LL MAKE  
A SPECIAL EFFORT  
FOR THE OLD  
MAN'S SAKE...

DOG-TIRED, HE WAS SOON SLEEPING SOUNDLY, AND HE WAS STILL ASLEEP WHEN SERGEANT MASON CALLED THE ROLL AT DAWN...



WHERE  
THE HECK IS  
SMITH? ANYONE  
SEEN HIM?

HE SLOPED  
OFF ON HIS OWN  
LAST NIGHT,  
SARGE.



THE SERGEANT SEARCHED EVERYWHERE — BUT THERE WAS NO SIGN OF SMITHY...

IF HE'S  
DESERTED HE'LL  
BE IN FOR A PACK  
OF TROUBLE!

SMITHY  
WOULDN'T DESERT,  
SARGE. HE'LL  
TURN UP!

WHEN THE PLANE BOARDED THE TRAIN BOUND  
FOR SORRENO, PRIVATE SMITH WAS STILL MISSING.

THERE'LL  
BE A HECK OF A ROW  
OVER THIS! THEY SAY  
COLONEL CUTLER OF THE  
FIRST BATTALION IS  
A REAL TERROR!



IT WAS HALF AN HOUR LATER WHEN THE BANGING AND SHUNTING OF WAGONS DISTURBED JOHNNY SMITH'S SLUMBERS...



SMITHY REALISED HE HAD MADE A PRIZE BOOB. AGHAST, HE REPORTED TO THE MOVEMENT CONTROL OFFICER...

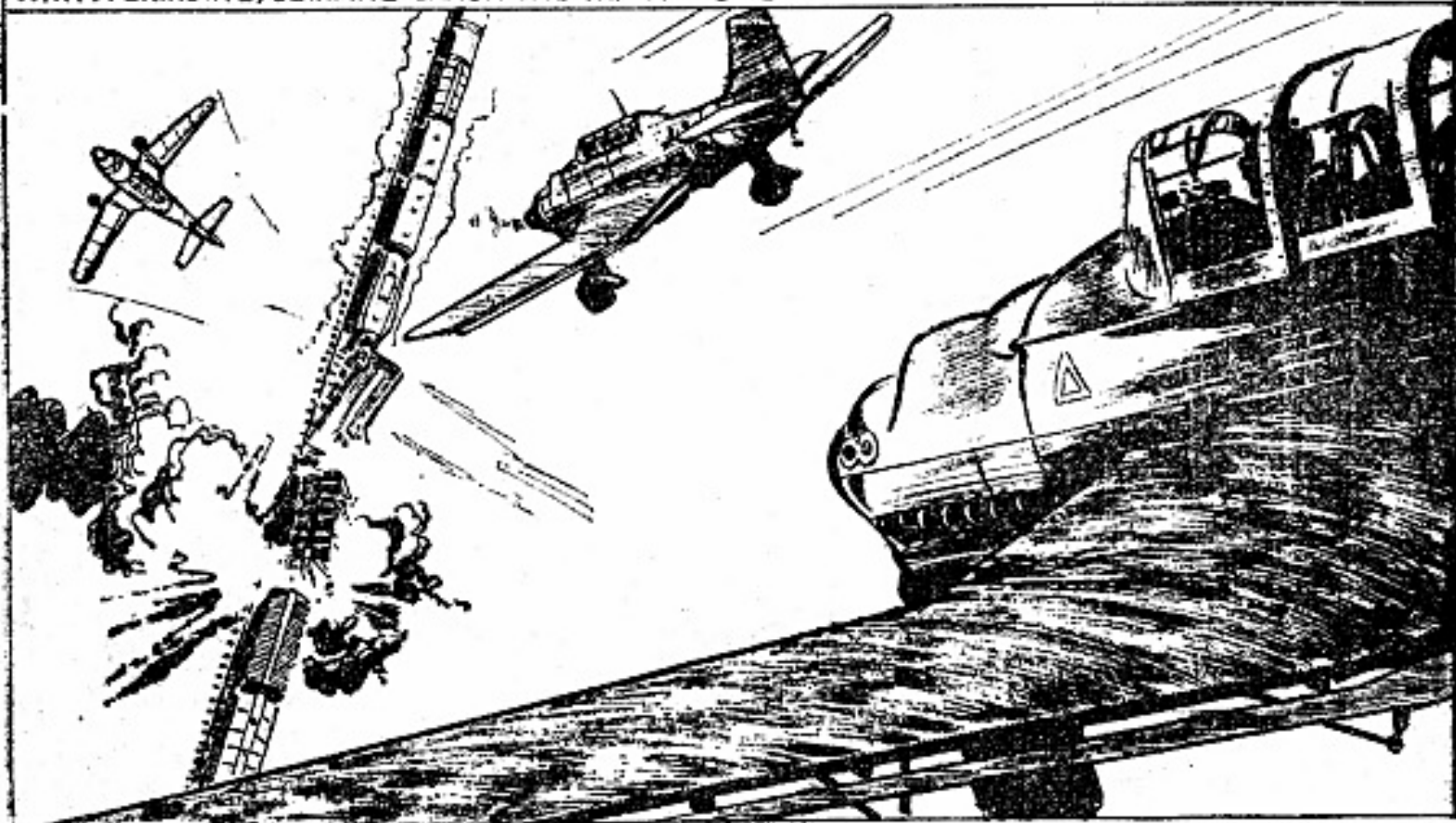


AN HOUR LATER, SMITHY WAS ON HIS WAY NORTH IN A MIXED CONVOY. BEFORE NOON, THEY COULD HEAR THE SULLEN THUNDER OF GUNS IN THE DISTANCE.





MEANWHILE, THE TRAIN CARRYING THE REST OF THE DRAFT HAD RUN INTO TROUBLE NEAR RUGGIO. THREE STUKAS CAME SCREAMING OUT OF THE SUN. A BOMB LANDED CLOSE TO THE TRACK AND WITH A GRINDING, BUMPING CRASH THE TRAIN PLOUGHED TO A STOP.



A HAIL OF MACHINE-GUN BULLETS STITCHED THE WAGONS AS THE STUKAS WHEELED AND ROARED BACK.



TWO BRITISH FIGHTERS SOON CHASED THE STUKAS OFF. SAVE FOR A FEW SLIGHTLY WOUNDED MEN, THE MIDSHIRE DRAFT WAS UNINJURED.

THIS IS A SET-BACK, LADS. WE'RE GOING TO BE LATE REACHING THE BATTALION NOW...



SO IT WAS SMITHY WHO ARRIVED AT SORREGNO FIRST, AFTER ALL.

YES, CHUM, WE'RE THE FIRST MIDSHIRES...

HAVE YOU COME TO JOIN US?

STONE ME! THIS MUST BE OUR LUCKY DAY!





THE NEWS WAS BROUGHT TO COMPANY SERGEANT-MAJOR POTTER, OF 'D' COMPANY...



C.S.M. POTTER STARED AT SMITHY IN HORROR.



COLONEL CUTLER ARRIVED ON THE SCENE, FOLLOWED BY THE ADJUTANT, CAPTAIN BROOKING.

WHAT'S  
GOING ON,  
SERGEANT-MAJOR?

IT'S THE  
NEW DRAFT, SIR—  
OR ALL THAT'S  
ARRIVED SO  
FAR!



THE C.O.'S ICE-BLUE EYES REGARDED SMITHY COLDLY, AND A SHUDDER SHOOK HIS RAMROD FRAME. LIKE SERGEANT-MAJOR POTTER, HE WAS AN EX-GUARDSMAN, AND THE SCRUFFY APPEARANCE OF PRIVATE SMITH WAS AN AFFRONT TO HIS VERY NATURE.

HOW IS  
IT YOU'RE HERE  
ON YOUR OWN?

I—I OVERSLEPT, SIR—AND THE  
DRAFT WENT ON THE TRAIN  
WITHOUT ME. I CAME ON BY  
ROAD CONVOY...





**OVERSLEPT!**

WELL, AT LEAST YOU GOT  
HERE BEFORE THE OTHERS.  
REPORT TO COMPANY SERGEANT-  
MAJOR POTTER—AND *SMARTEN*  
YOURSELF UP, MAN!



AS SMITHY SHUFFLED OFF LIKE A GANGLING  
SCARECROW, COLONEL CUTLER GAZED  
BLEAKLY INTO SPACE...

WE ARE SUPPOSED  
TO BE GETTING PICKED  
MEN! IF THE REST OF  
THE DRAFT ARE  
LIKE HIM...



A FEW HOURS LATER NEW ORDERS WERE SENT TO THE 1st. MIDSHIRES. THEY WERE TO MOVE UP  
TO THE FRONT THAT NIGHT AND RELIEVE THE NEW ZEALANDERS IN FRONT OF CAMPELLO.

WE ARE TO MAKE OFFENSIVE PATROLS FOR THREE  
NIGHTS, TO GET USED TO THE GROUND. THEN WE'RE  
RETURNING HERE FOR TEN DAYS' FINAL TRAINING  
BEFORE THE BIG PUSH STARTS.



BEFORE HE HAD A CHANCE TO GET ACQUAINTED WITH HIS NEW COMRADES, SMITHY WAS POSTED TO 15 PLATOON, 'D' COMPANY, AND PITCHFORKED INTO THE FRONT LINE. AS THE MIDSHIRES' CONVOY WOUND ITS WAY OVER THE RUGGED HILLS A RAIN OF SHELLS FELL AROUND THE TRUCKS.



THEY MARCHED THE LAST TWO MILES TO THEIR POSITIONS OPPOSITE THE VILLAGE OF MARCANTO. AS THE MIDSHIRES FILED IN, THE WEARY KIWIS FILED OUT.





# Chapter 3. *Fighting Patrol*

WHEN DAYLIGHT CAME, CAPTAIN MACLEAN, COMMANDING 'D' COMPANY, BRIEFED HIS PLATOON COMMANDERS AND C.S.M. POTTER.

WHEN THE BIG PUSH STARTS, WE'LL HAVE TO TAKE MARCANTO BEFORE WE CAN CROSS THE RIVER AND STORM CAMPELLO. 'D' COMPANY'S JOB TO-NIGHT IS TO SEND A RECONNAISSANCE PATROL INTO MARCANTO. YOU WILL TAKE FIFTEEN PLATOON; RAYNOR.

RIGHT, SIR.



THAT NIGHT, LIEUTENANT RAYNOR MUSTERED HIS PLATOON READY FOR THE PATROL...

WE'VE GOT TO KEEP SILENT, WHATEVER HAPPENS. I'LL COURT-MARTIAL THE FIRST MAN WHO MAKES A SOUND!



THE MOON WAS JUST RISING AS THE PATROL RACED IN SINGLE FILE TO THE RUINS OF THE VILLAGE.



SUDDENLY, A SPANDAU RATTLED NEARBY AND THE BULLETS SCYTHED THE DARKNESS. THE PATROL SANK TO THE GROUND AS DEATH WHISTLED A FEW INCHES ABOVE THEIR HEADS. SMITHY FELT HIS TONGUE GO DRY...





LIEUTENANT RAYNOR TURNED TO THE MAN NEAREST TO HIM...

SMITH—COME ALONG WITH ME! WE'LL TAKE A LOOK AHEAD.

YES, SIR!



EXCITED AND EAGER TO PLEASE, SMITHY FOLLOWED AT THE LIEUTENANT'S HEELS. HIS HEART WAS BEATING LIKE A TRIP HAMMER...




AS THEY WERE MOVING UP AN OVERGROWN LANE BETWEEN SHATTERED WALLS, THE LIEUTENANT SUDDENLY FLUNG HIMSELF TO THE GROUND. AS SMITHY FOLLOWED SUIT, HE HEARD RAYNOR'S WHISPER...

JERRIES! AROUND THAT NEXT CORNER!



THE EXPERIENCED OFFICER AND THE GREEN PRIVATE CRAWLED FORWARD INTO A DITCH THAT RAN AT RIGHT ANGLES TO THE LANE. A FEW YARDS ALONG, THE LIEUTENANT HALTED SUDDENLY. JUST AHEAD OF THEM WAS THE REAR OF A GERMAN STRONGPOINT!


WE'RE  
RIGHT BEHIND  
THEM HERE! WHAT  
A CHANCE!



THE LIEUTENANT WHISPERED URGENTLY TO SMITHY...

SLIP BACK AND BRING UP THE  
REST OF THE PLATOON—AND  
WE'LL SURPRISE THE JERRIES.  
BUT DON'T MAKE A  
SOUND!

YES, SIR!





## Raw Courage

SMITHY HEAVED HIMSELF UP TO TURN AROUND, TRIPPED, AND TOPPLED INTO THE DITCH WITH A JANGLE OF EQUIPMENT. A STIFLED OATH BURST FROM THE LIEUTENANT. . .

GOOD GRIEF!  
I TOLD YOU TO  
BE QUIET!



STARTLED, THE GERMANS WHIRLED AROUND. ONE OF THEM PEERED OVER THE BACK OF THE STRONGPOINT, HIS RIFLE AT THE READY.

CAN  
YOU SEE  
ANYTHING?

NEIN!  
PERHAPS WE  
IMAGINED IT...



THE SIGHT OF THE GERMAN WAS TOO MUCH FOR SMITHY. HE TOOK QUICK AIM AND HIS RIFLE SPAT FLAME. BUT HE WAS TOO EXCITED AND HIS SHOT WENT WIDE.



AT ONCE, THE GERMAN GUNNERS SWUNG THEIR MACHINE-GUN ROUND AND POURED A MURDEROUS BURST OF FIRE ALONG THE LANE AND ABOVE THE DITCH.




DESPERATELY, THE LIEUTENANT AND THE PRIVATE CRAWLED BACK ALONG THE DITCH, WHILE BULLETS SLASHED ABOVE THEIR HEADS...






BY THE TIME SMITHY AND RAYNOR REACHED THE REST OF THE PLATOON, BULLETS AND MORTAR SHELLS WERE SCREAMING TOWARDS THE MIDSHIRE LINE FROM EVERY GERMAN WEAPON-PIT IN THE VILLAGE.



WAIT TILL  
THINGS QUIETEN DOWN,  
THEN WE'LL GET BACK. THERE'S  
NO FUTURE FOR ANY PATROL  
IN THE VILLAGE TO-NIGHT —  
THANKS TO THAT  
IDIOT, SMITH!

WHEN 15 PLATOON HAD RETURNED TO 'D' COMPANY'S SECTOR, LIEUTENANT RAYNOR HAD A FEW FURIOUS WORDS WITH SMITHY.



WHY THE BLAZES DID YOU FIRE, YOU  
TRIGGER-HAPPY YOUNG FOOL? WE COULD  
HAVE TAKEN THAT STRONGPOINT  
WITHOUT FIRING A SHOT!

I— I'M  
SORRY, SIR!

CAPTAIN MACLEAN PLACED THE BLAME ON LIEUTENANT RAYNOR—  
BUT THAT WAS LITTLE CONSOLATION TO SMITHY.

WITH THE WHOLE PLATOON TO CHOOSE  
FROM, RAYNOR, WHY DID YOU PICK  
ON SMITH TO GO WITH YOU?  
YOU KNEW HE WAS  
USELESS!



C.S.M. POTTER ADDED THE FINAL SCORNFUL REMARKS...

DIDN'T THEY  
TEACH YOU **ANYTHING**,  
SMITH? ON A RECCE PATROL  
YOU DON'T SHOOT UNLESS  
YOU HAVE TO!  
REMEMBER THAT!

YES, SIR...  
IT'S JUST THAT  
I GOT EXCITED...





ONLY CORPORAL FLETCHER WAS SYMPATHETIC... AND SMITHY FELT A WARM GLOW OF GRATITUDE TOWARDS HIM.

NEVER MIND, SMITHY — WE ALL MAKE MISTAKES. IT WAS YOUR FIRST TIME IN ACTION — YOU'LL DO BETTER NEXT TIME.



THREE DAYS LATER, THE 1st. MIDSHIRES WERE WITHDRAWN ONCE MORE TO SORREGNO TO PLAN THE BIG ATTACK. BY THE TIME THEY GOT THERE, THE REST OF THE DRAFT UNDER SERGEANT MASON HAD ARRIVED.



IN THE DAYS OF INTENSIVE TRAINING THAT FOLLOWED, SMITHY WAS SELDOM OUT OF TROUBLE...

WHAT THE HECK D'YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING, SMITH? WHY AREN'T YOU ON PARADE?

I'M SORRY, SIR. I WAS JUST WRITING A LETTER...

WRITING A LETTER? WHAT DO YOU THINK THIS IS? THE NAAFI? **GET ON PARADE, YOU HORRIBLE MAN!**





DAYS OF HARD TRAINING WENT BY. JUST BEFORE THEY WENT UP TO THE LINE FOR THE BIG ASSAULT, THE BATTALION WAS INSPECTED BY THE BRIGADIER. AS USUAL, SMITHY DISTINGUISHED HIMSELF!

THIS MAN DOESN'T EVEN KNOW HOW TO DRESS HIMSELF PROPERLY! WHAT IS HE? A RECRUIT?

ER—YES, SIR. HE WAS IN THE LAST DRAFT.



THAT NIGHT, THE MIDSHIRES MOVED UP TO A POSITION IN FRONT OF MARCANTO. 'A', 'B' AND 'C' COMPANIES WERE TO STORM THE VILLAGE. THEN 'D' COMPANY WAS TO ADVANCE THROUGH THEM, CAPTURE THE BRIDGE ACROSS THE RIVER AND GAIN A FOOTHOLD IN CAMPELLO ITSELF.



# Chapter 4. *In Enemy Lines*



FIFTEEN MINUTES BEFORE ZERO-HOUR, THE NIGHT FLAMED IN THE SUDDEN THUNDER OF THE BARRAGE. SHELL-BURSTS AND THE ROAR OF AIRCRAFT FILLED THE AIR. THEN THE THREE ATTACKING COMPANIES ADVANCED...

SMITHY FELT TENSE AS HE WAITED FOR 'D' COMPANY TO MOVE FORWARD. THE DIN AHEAD ROSE TO A DEAFENING CRESCENDO...

I WISH WE COULD START MOVING! THIS WAITING IS GETTING ME DOWN.





AT LAST THE ORDER CAME AND 'D' COMPANY MOVED FORWARD THROUGH MARCANTO AND TOWARDS THE BRIDGE. A MURDEROUS HAIL OF FIRE SWEEP ACROSS THE RIVER. IT WAS PLAIN THAT THE GERMANS MEANT TO FIGHT HARD FOR CAMPELLO...



IT WAS SMITHY'S FIRST TASTE OF REAL BATTLE, AND FOR A MOMENT HE FELT COLD WITH FEAR. SPANDAUS HAMMERED FURIOUSLY FROM THE NAZI POSITIONS AND THE ACRID SMELL OF CORDITE STUNG HIS NOSTRILS...



BEHIND A CURTAIN OF SMOKE PUT DOWN BY THE MORTAR SECTION, 'D' COMPANY STORMED THE BRIDGE...



BATTLE-WISE AND FIGHTING FIT, THE MIDSHIRES SMASHED THEIR WAY INTO THE TOWN. STRONG AS A BULL AND ACHING TO PROVE HIMSELF AS A SOLDIER, SMITHY WAS UP AMONG THE LEADERS...

IF I FOLLOW CAPTAIN  
MACLEAN I CAN'T GO FAR  
WRONG... WISH DAD  
COULD SEE ME  
NOW!





SMITHY NEVER KNEW JUST HOW IT HAPPENED, BUT SUDDENLY HE FOUND HIMSELF OUT ON HIS OWN, LYING PANTING BEHIND A SMOKING HEAP OF RUBBLE...



WHERE ARE THE OTHERS?

THE GERMANS IN CAMPELLO WERE FAR STRONGER THAN THE ALLIED COMMAND HAD ESTIMATED. NOW THE GERMAN CORPS COMMANDER MADE HIS FIRST COUNTER-STROKE...

THE ENEMY ARE IN THE TOWN, BUT THEIR FORCES ARE SPLIT UP AND DISORGANISED. TELL DIETRICH TO SEND IN HIS JAEGER BATTALION AND THROW THE ENGLANDERS BACK OVER THE RIVER!



LYING IN THE RUINS OF A SHATTERED HOUSE, SMITHY SAW THE FIRST SIGNS OF THE GERMAN COUNTER-MOVE. FOUR HEAVY TANKS CAME CLANKING ACROSS THE SMASHED PILES OF BRICKWORK, SWARMS OF GREY-CLAD INFANTRYMEN IN THEIR WAKE.



IT'S A BIG ATTACK—AND THERE'S NO ONE HERE TO STOP 'EM!

SMITHY FLATTENED HIMSELF INTO THE DUST AND LAY MOTIONLESS AS THE ATTACK FLOODED PAST HIM.



THERE'S  
NOTHING I CAN DO.  
I'VE COME TOO FAR  
FORWARD — AND  
I'M ON MY OWN!

ALL THROUGH THE LONG HOURS OF DAYLIGHT HE LAY LOW, HOLDING HIS BREATH WHENEVER A GERMAN PASSED NEAR HIM. AT LONG LAST, DARKNESS CAME AND HE SET OUT TO TRY TO GET BACK TO HIS OWN LINES.





FROM THE DIRECTION OF THE BRIDGE CAME THE CEASELESS CHATTER OF SMALL-ARMS FIRE AND THE DEEPER CRASH OF MORTAR BOMBS, BUT FARTHER TO THE WEST, WHERE THE TOWN STRAGGLED INTO SCRUBBY WOODLAND, THINGS WERE QUIETER.



SLIPPING BEHIND A GERMAN MORTAR BATTERY, SMITHY PASSED THROUGH THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE TOWN AND REACHED A SCRUB-COVERED RAVINE.

IF I FOLLOW THIS RAVINE DOWN TO THE RIVER, I MIGHT BE ABLE TO SWIM ACROSS...



HE SKIRTED THE EDGE OF THE RAVINE FOR A WHILE AND STIFFENED SUDDENLY AS HE CAUGHT SIGHT OF MOVEMENT IN THE SCRUB BELOW HIM. THEN HIS EYES WIDENED IN SURPRISE...

LUMME! THAT'S CAPTAIN MACLEAN IN THE LEAD, AND SERGEANT-MAJOR POTTER BEHIND HIM! THEY'RE GOING THE WRONG WAY! THEY'LL RUN SMACK INTO THE JERRIES...



BUT, AS IT HAPPENED, CAPTAIN MACLEAN KNEW VERY WELL WHAT HE WAS DOING! HE HAD ALREADY DISCOVERED THAT THE GERMANS WERE HOLDING THE LOWER END OF THE RAVINE IN STRENGTH AND THAT THERE WAS NO WAY OUT IN THAT DIRECTION...

WE'LL LEAVE THE RAVINE HIGHER UP, MAKE A WIDE DETOUR AND REACH THE RIVER FARTHER TO THE SOUTH.

RIGHT, SIR. LET'S HOPE JERRY DOESN'T SPOT US!

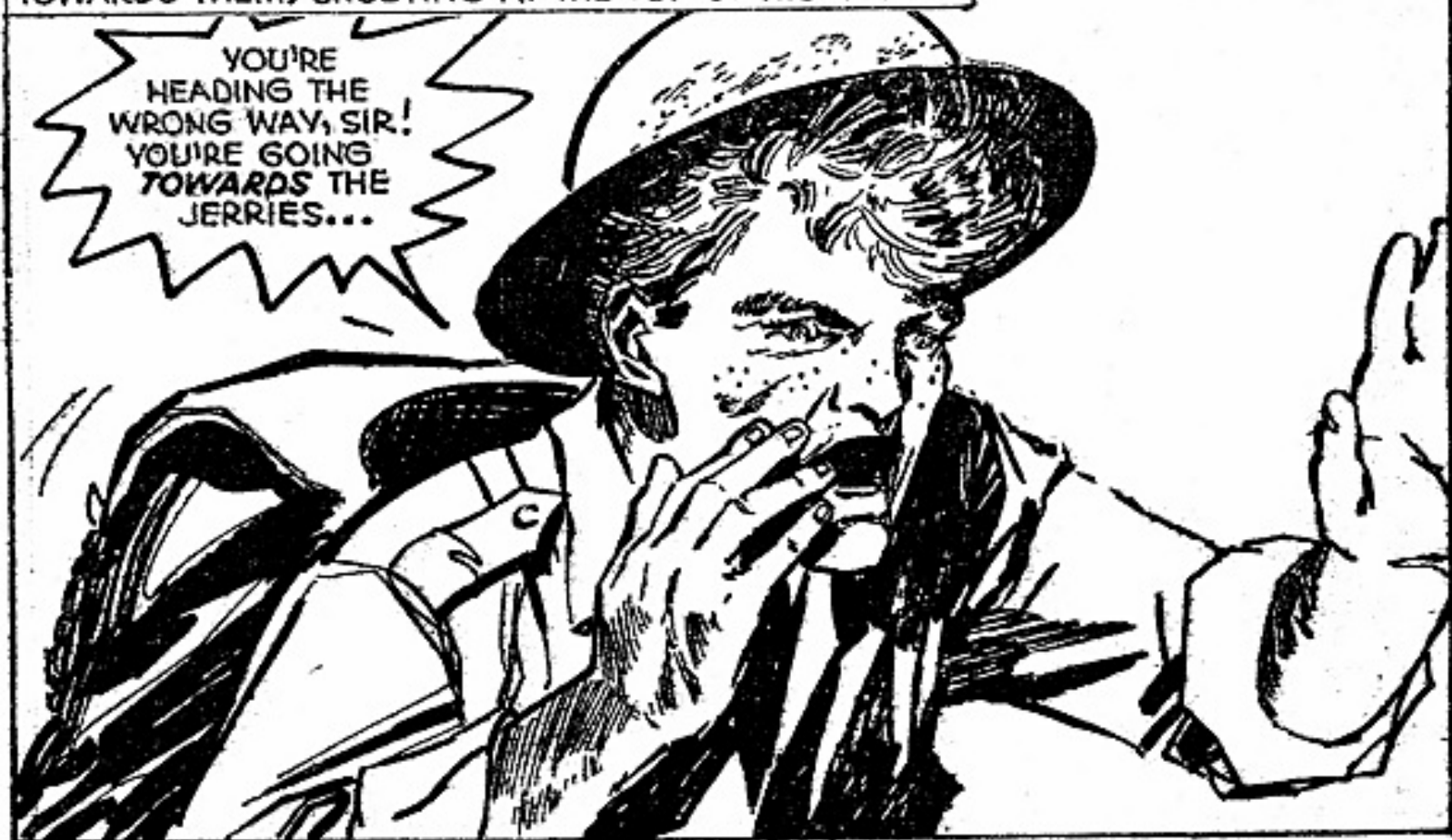






BUT IT WAS TOO LATE — SMITHY HAD NOT ONLY SEEN THEM, HE WAS ON HIS WAY TOWARDS THEM, SHOUTING AT THE TOP OF HIS VOICE!

YOU'RE  
HEADING THE  
WRONG WAY, SIR!  
YOU'RE GOING  
TOWARDS THE  
JERRIES...



A GERMAN POST FARTHER ALONG THE RAVINE HAD ALREADY SIGHTED SMITHY. A RIFLEMAN HAD FIXED THE YOUNG SOLDIER IN HIS SIGHTS, WHEN THE LEUTENANT IN COMMAND STOPPED HIM.








CAPTAIN MACLEAN GAVE AN AGONISED GROAN AS A STORM OF BULLETS SENT HIM AND HIS MEN DIVING FOR COVER.




SOME OF THE GERMANS HAD SWITCHED THEIR ATTENTION TO SMITHY AND THREW A WHISTLING BARRIER OF BULLETS BETWEEN HIM AND THE MEN HE HAD MISTAKENLY TRIED TO HELP. DESPERATELY, HE FLUNG HIMSELF BEHIND COVER...



JERRIES!  
STONE THE CROWS!  
I DIDN'T SEE  
THEM!

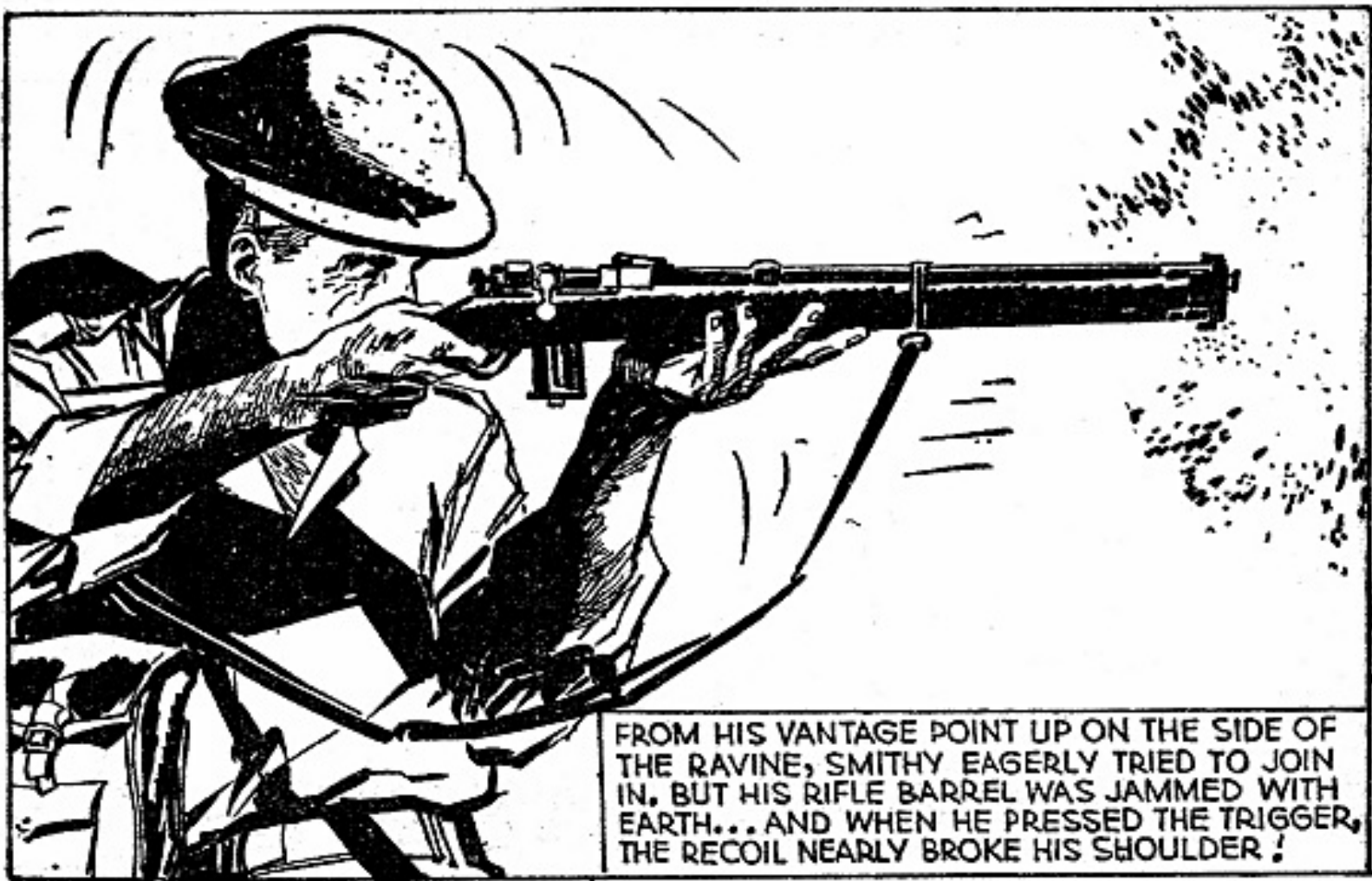
THINKING THAT HE HAD TO DEAL WITH A FEW BROKEN-SPIRITED AND DEFEATED STRAGGLERS, THE GERMAN OFFICER LED HIS MEN DOWN INTO THE RAVINE FOR THE KILL!



FOLLOW ME!  
WE WILL FINISH  
THESE STUPID  
ENGLANDERS!



LEUTNANT HANS STOFFEL SOON DISCOVERED HIS MISTAKE, FOR HE AND HIS MEN HAD GONE BARELY TEN YARDS BEFORE A SAVAGE TORNADO OF FIRE RAKED THEM...



FROM HIS VANTAGE POINT UP ON THE SIDE OF THE RAVINE, SMITHY EAGERLY TRIED TO JOIN IN, BUT HIS RIFLE BARREL WAS JAMMED WITH EARTH... AND WHEN HE PRESSED THE TRIGGER, THE RECOIL NEARLY BROKE HIS SHOULDER!

BY THE TIME SMITHY, DAZED AND BLEEDING, REACHED CAPTAIN MACLEAN, THE GERMAN LEUTNANT AND HIS MEN WERE LYING DEAD ON THE SLOPE OF THE RAVINE. THE WELCOME SMITHY RECEIVED WAS HARDLY WHAT HE HAD EXPECTED...

YOU CRACK-BRAINED IDIOT, SMITH! ARE YOU TRYING TO GET US ALL KILLED?



...AND WHERE'S YOUR RIFLE, MAN? THERE'S NO NEED TO PANIC JUST BECAUSE YOU COME UNDER FIRE!



DAZED AND BEWILDERED, SMITHY KEPT SILENT, AND WAS SOON TRAILING ALONG AFTER THE CAPTAIN AND THE SERGEANT-MAJOR AS THEY CREPT OFF ONCE MORE IN THEIR WIDE DETOUR.





## Raw Courage

IT SEEMED TO SMITHY THAT THEY TOILED ALONG FOR MILES. AT DAWN THEY FOUND A GAP IN THE LINES AND REACHED THE RIVER. ON THE OTHER SIDE WAS FRIENDLY TERRITORY.

WE'LL HAVE TO SWIM LIGHT—  
SO DUMP YOUR GEAR! I HATE  
TO LEAVE WEAPONS BEHIND,  
BUT THERE'S NOTHING  
ELSE FOR IT.



EVEN FOR A STRONG SWIMMER, IT WAS A TOUGH STRUGGLE THROUGH THE ICY WATER. SERGEANT-MAJOR POTTER WAS THE FIRST TO REACH THE FAR BANK...

COME ON,  
LADS! YOU'VE  
NEARLY MADE  
IT!



MEANWHILE THE REMNANTS OF SHATTERED 'D' COMPANY, HANGING DESPERATELY TO A TINY BRIDGEHEAD ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF CAMPELLO, HAD BEEN RELIEVED. ONLY A FEW DAZED, HAGGARD MEN REACHED THE RESERVE AREA.



LIEUTENANT RAYNOR REPORTED TO COLONEL CUTLER.

WE GOT SPLIT UP INTO SMALL GROUPS IN CAMPELLO, SIR. THE JERRIES COUNTER-ATTACKED AND SURROUNDED THE TOWN.

I DON'T LIKE THE LOOK OF IT, RAYNOR. THE ENEMY IS MUCH STRONGER HERE THAN THE TOP BRASS THINK...





TWO HOURS LATER CAPTAIN MACLEAN'S SMALL PARTY REPORTED BACK. THE CAPTAIN HAD A STORMY INTERVIEW WITH THE COLONEL... SPOKE SAVAGELY...



SERGEANT-MAJOR POTTER HAD A BRILLIANT IDEA...

WE HAD A CHIT FROM BRIGADE ASKING US TO SEND A MAN ON A COOKERY COURSE, SIR. WHY NOT SEND SMITH? HE'LL END UP AS A BRIGADE COOK...



SMITHY WAS STUNNED WHEN HE HEARD THE NEWS...

COOKERY, SIR? BUT - BUT I DON'T WANT TO BE A COOK!

IN THIS UNIT, SMITH, YOU OBEY ORDERS! REPORT TO BRIGADE H.Q. RIGHT AWAY.



# Chapter 5. A Medal for Courage

THAT NIGHT SMITHY HAD WALKED TO BRIGADE H.Q., IN AN ORCHARD HALF A MILE BEHIND THE LINES. FOR A LONG TIME HE LAY AWAKE, THINKING BITTERLY OF THE EVENTS OF THE DAY...

A COOK! HOW AM I EVER GOING TO FACE DAD AGAIN?



THEY ALL SAY I'LL NEVER MAKE A SOLDIER — BUT I'VE ALWAYS DONE MY BEST, AND I'VE NEVER PLAYED THE COWARD...





## Raw Courage



AS THE TANKS RUMBLING PAST, FIRING WILDLY, HE GRABBED HIS RIFLE AND EQUIPMENT AND DIVED FOR A DITCH.



ONLY AFTERWARDS DID SMITHY LEARN THAT THE GERMANS HAD OVERWHELMED THE BRITISH TROOPS IN ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL SURPRISE THRUSTS OF THE CAMPAIGN.

SPASMODIC FIRING BROKE OUT AS A FEW ISOLATED TROOPS RESISTED DESPERATELY. SMITHY WAS TEMPTED TO JOIN THEM — BUT THE BITTERNESS IN HIS HEART STOPPED HIM.



AS TIME PASSED THE BATTLE SURGED FARTHER AWAY, AND SOON AFTER DAWN A SMALL PARTY OF BRITISH PRISONERS WERE MARCHED ALONG THE ROAD.



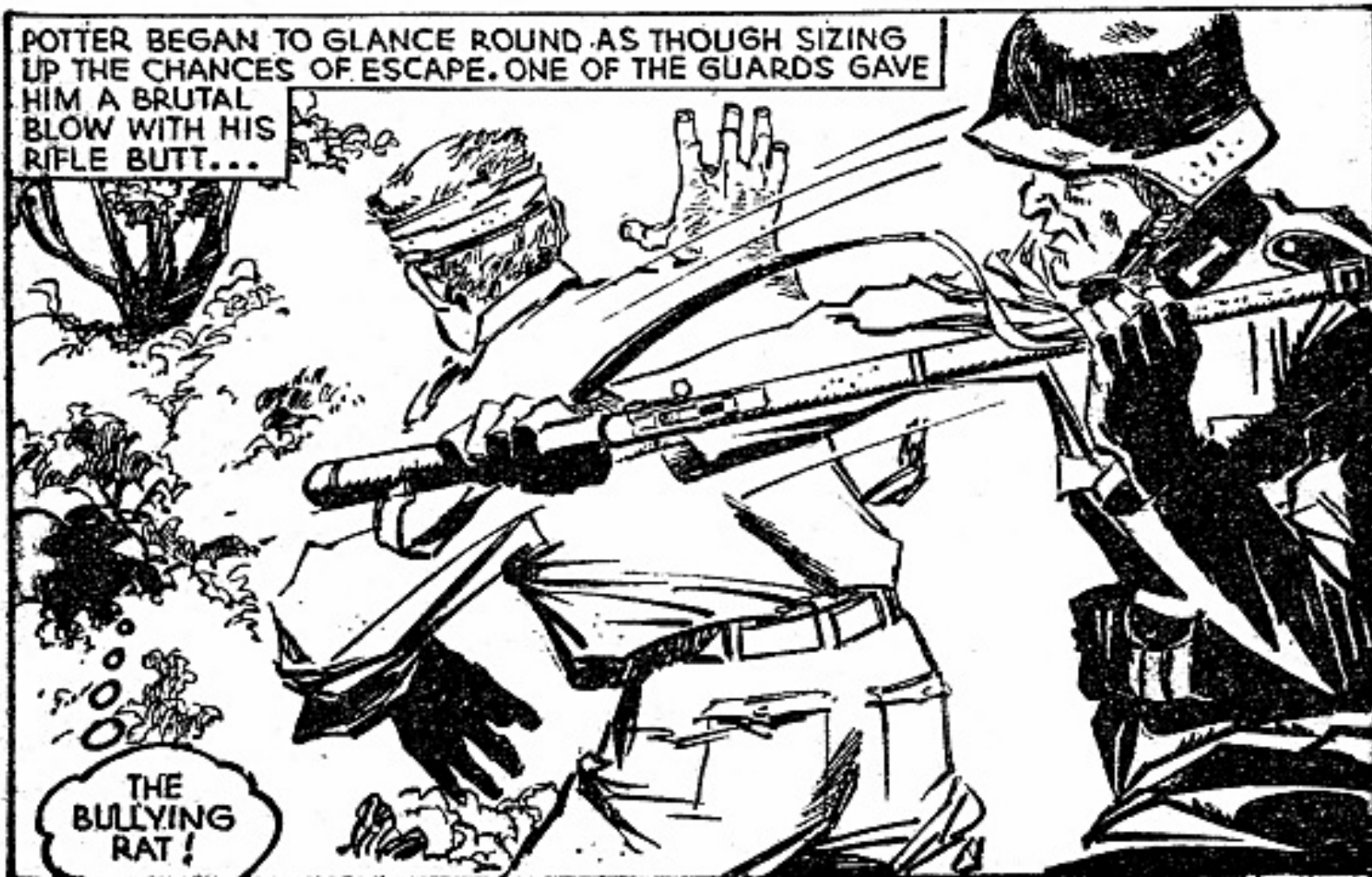


QUIETLY SMITHY WORMED HIS WAY ALONG THE DITCH, TILL HE COULD SEE POTTER CLEARLY. THE SERGEANT-MAJOR'S HEAD WAS BANDAGED.

HE'S  
WOUNDED. BUT  
IT TAKES A LOT  
TO KNOCK OUT  
A BLOKE LIKE  
POTTER.



POTTER BEGAN TO GLANCE ROUND AS THOUGH SIZING UP THE CHANCES OF ESCAPE. ONE OF THE GUARDS GAVE HIM A BRUTAL BLOW WITH HIS RIFLE BUTT...



THE  
BULLYING  
RAT!



BUT THE MEMORY OF SERGEANT-MAJOR POTTER'S WORDS RETURNED, RANKLING...

BUT WHY SHOULD I STICK MY NECK OUT HELPING HIM? HE THINKS I'M NO GOOD... NEVER MAKE A SOLDIER...



SMITHY BURROWED DOWN UNDER COVER AGAIN— BUT HIS CONSCIENCE NAGGED HIM.

IF I LET MYSELF BE CAPTURED WITHOUT PUTTING UP A FIGHT I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO LOOK DAD IN THE FACE AGAIN! I'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING...





SMITHY'S CHANCE CAME WHEN A SALVO OF BRITISH SHELLS BURST ALONG THE ROAD. THE TWO GERMAN GUARDS DUCKED INSTINCTIVELY—AND IN A FLASH SMITHY WAS ON THEM.



THE SECOND GERMAN WHIRLED—AND SMITHY FIRED FROM THE HIP...





AFTER A WHILE THEY HALTED, HIDING AMONG SOME TREES WHILE THEY GOT THEIR BEARINGS.

...I WAS KNOCKED OUT BY A MORTAR BOMB. WHEN I CAME TO I WAS A PRISONER! WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?

I WAS ASLEEP IN THE ORANGE GROVE, SIR. THE NEXT THING I KNEW JERRY TANKS WERE OVERRUNNING BRIGADE HEADQUARTERS.





THE SERGEANT-MAJOR LISTENED INTENTLY. FROM THE DISTANCE CAME THE THUNDEROUS DIN OF BATTLE...

IT SOUNDS AS IF OUR CHAPS HAVE CHECKED THE JERRIES. OUR DUTY NOW IS TO GET BACK TO THEM.



KEEPING UNDER COVER, THE PRIVATE AND THE SERGEANT-MAJOR SLIPPED FORWARD. THERE WERE GERMANS EVERYWHERE NOW, BUT BRITISH SHELLS WERE PLASTERING THEM, AND LOW-FLYING FIGHTER BOMBERS RAKED THEM WITH CANNON AND MACHINE-GUNS...

AT ONE SPOT THEY FOUND SOME OF THEIR OWN REGIMENT LYING WHERE THEY HAD PLAINLY FOUGHT TO THE LAST MAN. POTTER'S FACE WAS GRIM AS HE PICKED UP TWO TOMMY-GUNS AND HANDED ONE TO SMITHY.



LAST  
TIME I SAW THESE  
LADS THEY WERE  
FIGHTING A REARGUARD  
ACTION! TAKE THIS, SMITH...  
IT'LL BE HANDIER THAN  
THAT RIFLE.

CLOSER TO THE FIGHTING, IT BECAME HARDER TO KEEP OUT OF SIGHT. ONCE THEY HAD TO FEIGN DEATH AS A GERMAN 'GUN-TEAM' WENT HURRYING PAST.

**SCHNELL! SCHNELL!**  
THEY NEED US AT  
THE FRONT!





WHEN IT WAS SAFE THEY MOVED ON AGAIN, DARTING FROM COVER TO COVER, DRAWING EVER CLOSER TO THE INFERNO WHERE FRESH BRITISH TROOPS WERE STEMMING THE GERMAN ADVANCE.

ANOTHER  
HALF MILE, AND  
WE'LL BE THERE!  
WE'RE GOING TO  
MAKE IT,  
SMITH!

LOOK AT THOSE  
JERRY MORTARS, SIR!  
WHAT A TARGET...



BEFORE THE HORRIFIED SERGEANT-MAJOR COULD STOP HIM, SMITHY, TRIGGER-HAPPY AS EVER, RAISED HIS TOMMY-GUN AND CUT LOOSE...

THOSE JERRIES ARE BLOWING  
OUR LADS TO BITS...

SMITH!...YOU  
BRAINLESS  
IDIOT!



THE STARTLED MORTARMEN TOOK COVER, AND BEGAN TO SHOOT BACK. BULLETS CRACKED AND SANG VICIOUSLY ON ALL SIDES OF SMITHY AND THE SERGEANT-MAJOR.

WHY IS IT THAT WHENEVER WE NEED TO BE QUIET, YOU START A ROW? WE WERE ALMOST HOME — NOW WE'LL HAVE TO SHOOT OUR WAY OUT!

S-SORRY, SIR!



WITH BULLETS WHINING AROUND THEM, THE TWO FUGITIVES DIVED INTO THE COVER OF A SUNKEN ROAD — ONLY TO FIND THAT A GERMAN MACHINE-GUN WAS POSTED DEAD AHEAD!

THERE'S ONLY ONE THING FOR IT, SMITH — WE'LL RUSH 'EM!

OKAY, SIR!





SMITHY LEAPT FORWARD, HIS TOMMY-GUN HAMMERING A STREAM OF LEAD. THE SPANDAU GUNNERS WERE TAKEN BY SURPRISE...

ACHTUNG!... ENGLANDERS!

AAGH-H!



A BURLY OFFICER RAISED HIS LUGER, AND DEATH REACHED FOR SERGEANT-MAJOR POTTER. BUT SMITHY CRACKED THE HEEL OF HIS GUN INTO THE OFFICER'S MIDRIF...



SWIFTLY THE TWO MEN RACED AWAY FROM THE SHATTERED NAZI MACHINE-GUN POST.

THANKS, SMITHY!  
YOU SAVED MY  
BACON THEN!

HE  
CALLED ME  
SMITHY!



AHEAD OF THEM LAY A BATTERED FARMHOUSE THAT SEEMED TO BE IN NO-MAN'S-LAND. SMITHY AND POTTER HEADED TOWARDS IT. THEN A BULLET SMASHED INTO SMITHY'S THIGH...

UGH-H!  
I'VE COPPED  
ONE!

I'LL GIVE  
YOU A LIFT,  
SMITHY!



POTTER ALMOST CARRIED SMITHY THOSE LAST FEW DESPERATE YARDS TO COVER...

HANG ON!  
WE'RE NEARLY  
THERE!





ONCE UNDER COVER, POTTER BANDAGED SMITHY'S LEG. THEN, SUDDENLY, THE TIDE OF BATTLE FLOWED THE OTHER WAY, AND A BRITISH ARMoured COLUMN CAME CRASHING FORWARD IN A FURIOUS COUNTER-STROKE.

WHAT DID I TELL YOU, LAD?  
THIS IS WHERE OUR LADS  
GET THEIR OWN BACK!



WHEN THE DIN SUBSIDED TWO HOURS LATER, THE GERMANS HAD BEEN DRIVEN BACK MORE THAN TWO MILES. AS STRETCHER-BEARERS CAME TO COLLECT SMITHY, SERGEANT-MAJOR POTTER SPOKE A FEW FINAL WORDS TO HIM...

THERE'S ONE THING I'D LIKE YOU TO  
KNOW, SMITH. YOU MAY NOT BE A  
PARADE-GROUND SOLDIER, BUT YOU'RE  
A DARNED GOOD FIGHTING MAN. I'M  
GOING TO RECOMMEND YOU FOR  
A MEDAL!



PRIDE AND A GREAT HAPPINESS SWELLED SMITHY'S HEART. HE TRIED TO SPEAK, BUT NO WORDS WOULD COME...

A MEDAL!...  
GOSH, DAD WILL  
BE TICKLED  
PINK!

TWO WEEKS LATER, THE 1st. MIDSHIRES, FIFTY PER CENT BELOW STRENGTH, WERE CAMPED WELL BEHIND THE LINES, AWAITING A BIG INTAKE OF NEW MEN. C.S.M. POTTER WAS SPEAKING TO CAPTAIN MACLEAN...

I'M GLAD SMITH'S GETTING HIS MEDAL—BUT IT'S A LOAD OFF MY MIND NOW HE'S GONE. HE WAS A PROBLEM IF EVER THERE WAS ONE, SIR.





SOON POTTER WAS STRIDING OFF TO INSPECT THE NEW DRAFT. IT WAS ALL OLD STUFF TO HIM. THEY CAME TO HIM GREEN AND RAW AND HE MADE SOLDIERS OUT OF THEM...



POTTER'S EYES FLICKERED OVER THE MEN—AND WIDENED IN HORROR AS THEY FELL ON ONE MAN AT THE END OF THE REAR RANK. THERE WAS SOMETHING FAMILIAR ABOUT THE SCRUFFY FIGURE...



AS POTTER SPOKE TO HIM, THE NEW MAN STOOD AT ATTENTION, HIS RUMPLED KHAKI UNIFORM HANGING LOOSELY ABOUT HIM, LIKE AN OLD BELL TENT...

WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

SMITH,  
SIR, I'VE GOT A  
BROTHER IN THIS  
MOB... YOU CALL  
HIM SMITHY...

A LOW MOAN BROKE FROM THE SERGEANT-MAJOR...

SO YOU'RE  
**BROTHER BERT!**  
I GET RID OF ONE  
PACKET OF TROUBLE—  
AND GET ANOTHER.





SUDDENLY COMPANY SERGEANT-MAJOR POTTER THOUGHT BACK—TO A SCENE IN AN ORANGE-GROVE TWO WEEKS BEFORE, WHEN PRIVATE JOHN SMITH HAD SHOWN HIMSELF IN HIS TRUE LIGHT, AS A FIGHTING SOLDIER, COURAGEOUS AND LOYAL. HIS STERN FEATURES BROKE INTO A SMILE...

YOU'RE A SCRUFFY, HORRIBLE LITTLE MAN—SAME AS YOUR BROTHER. BUT IF YOU CAN FIGHT HALF AS WELL AS HE CAN, YOU'LL DO!



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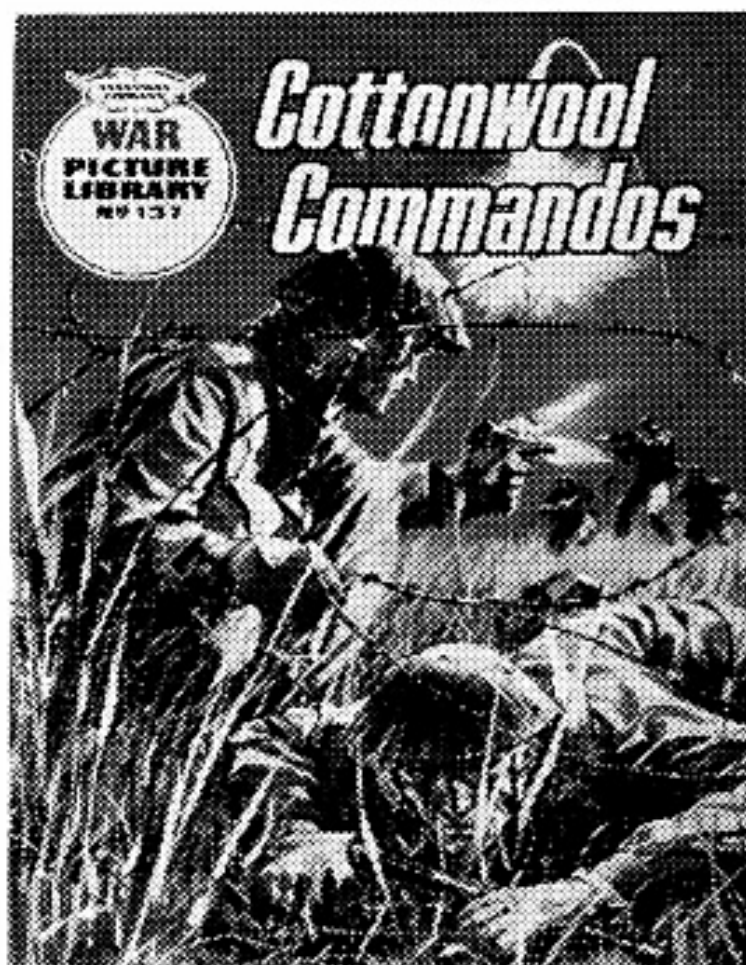
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